A Common Place: Place-making in Gerrard Winstanley's Vision of the English Commons
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Abstract

The writings and actions of Gerrard Winstanley and his Diggers, as they began digging the common land of St George's Hill in 1649, have frequently been regarded as supporting a communist and ecological position. These are both fundamentally anachronistic claims. However, Winstanley did express a deeper emotional connection than opponents of the Marxist and Green claimants allow. Using the methodological framework of "space" versus "place," this thesis uncovers how Winstanley held empathetic feelings for the commons and the creatures upon it while maintaining superiority over them. By examining Winstanley's claims of the rights to the commons and the empathetic superiority he held over the land and animals, it is established that Winstanley's protestations functioned as a form of place-making. Through this place-making, he established the English commons as a "place" of resistance, spirituality, and equality, refusing authoritative control by engaging all people to live with an empathetic superiority for nature, bringing them closer to God.

Introduction

...it was shewed us by vision in dreams, and out of dreams,

that that should be the place we should begin upon.[1]

– Gerrard Winstanley

In 1649, Gerrard Winstanley declared that the earth "was made to be a common treasury of relief for all, both beasts and man," as he and other protesters, collectively known as the Diggers, or True Levellers, began digging and planting the commons at St. George's Hill.[2] Opposing the enclosure of common lands, Winstanley's writings provide an insight into the commoners' thoughts on their surrounding environments in seventeenth-century England. Historians have widely debated Winstanley's work, as scholars frequently contest the reasoning behind why he and the Diggers took up ploughs, often using anachronistic argumentation. Many notable debates come from Marxist historians, who argue that Winstanley represents an early form of agrarian communism.[3] These debates have been furthered by those in the green movement, arguing that Winstanley represents a proto-ecologist who cared for the trees and animals, directly leading to his actions to preserve these features.[4] This is an anachronistic claim, as the term "ecology" only came into use during the nineteenth century.[5] The term environment

[1] Gerrard Winstanley, "A Declaration to the Powers of England," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 14; Spelling in primary materials has been modernized and punctuation changed to modern usage.
[2] Winstanley, "A Declaration to the Powers of England," 13.
[3] Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London, Penguin Books, 1991), 341.
[4] Daniel Johnson, "Winstanley's Ecology: The English Diggers Today," *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 65:7 (2013), 20-31.
[5] Ariel Hessayon, "Restoring the Garden of Eden in England's Green and Pleasant Land: The Diggers and the Fruits of the Earth," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 2:2 (2008):1-25.

did exist during the early modern period; however, its use to describe one's surroundings only emerged in the nineteenth century.

Since the 1960s, many scholars have held Winstanley as one of the first green revolutionaries. This began with Marxist historians citing Winstanley as the "ultimate ancestor of the English labour and co-operative movements" and establisher of the world's first "communist political programme."[6] The growing environmentalist movement amongst the left during the 1960s and 70s took up Winstanley as a paragon of the movement. Ian Bradley's 1989 magazine article furthered this idea in the public's consciousness, proposing Winstanley as "England's Pioneer Green." Derek Wall furthered this idea by including Winstanley as a "green revolutionary" in his *Green History* reader."[7] Those in the present-day left and green movements have embraced Winstanley, echoing his sentiments when examining the changing environments around our world.

This essay follows in thought with the work of Ariel Hessayon, who argues against these green narratives, which use Winstanley to legitimate their political opinions rather than write his history based on the available evidence. Hessayon's argument for less politicization when examining the Diggers is important. However, disregarding this green narrative acts as too far of a shift in the other direction, ignoring the emotional nuance and reasoning behind Winstanley's desire to protect the commons. Hessayon does not dismiss early modern environmental issues entirely, acknowledging seventeenth-century concerns arising from the filth and diminishing air quality of London, dirty water, and growing wood shortages. As a consequence of Hessayon's

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[6] Christopher Hill, *Winstanley: 'The Law of Freedom' and other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 10.

[7] Ian Bradley, "Gerrard Winstanley: England's Pioneer Green?," *History Today,* August 1, 1989; Derek Wall, *Green History: A Reader in Environmental Literature, Philosophy and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1994), 203-206.

disregarding of anachronism, these many issues are addressed purely practically, establishing that the Diggers focused on improving their surroundings and worried about certain parts of their environment only so they could utilize it for material benefit. This economic aspect is certainly true but does not form the entirety of the Diggers' thoughts. In his closing, Hessayon recognizes Winstanley's pity for his mistreated animals, noting that "these feelings complemented his belief that God had made all creatures for man's 'pleasure and profit.'"[8] While this brief mention in the conclusion is important, it does not do enough to establish Winstanley as having certain emotional connections to his surroundings while denying claims of his "green" ideology. This essay follows this argument further, examining Winstanley's published pamphlets to better understand how he and his fellow Diggers viewed their spatial surroundings on the commons.

Through Winstanley's writings, two primary themes become notable. The first is his opinion that all men should have equal rights to the commons. Winstanley supports this argument in many ways, citing biblical scripture and history to recall how these rights were established and passed down. These citations established that God created the earth for all creatures to use and that the restrictions on the rights to the commons were a recent phenomenon, initially brought on by the fall of man and brought to England by William the Conqueror. Supporting these historical claims, Winstanley used contemporary political thought following the English Civil War to demonstrate the evils of the enclosing lords and why the newly-formed commonwealth should support access to the commons. Winstanley was not simply an ideologue who focused on the immaterial reasons why access to the commons should be open. Instead, he additionally argued that the earth was necessary for maintaining life and that denying individuals from the commons would restrict their ability to live.

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[8] Hessayon, "Restoring the Garden of Eden in England's Green and Pleasant Land," 16-17.

The second theme demonstrated throughout Winstanley's writings is what could be called an empathetic superiority over nature. This is a constructed term, combining many of the arguments used by green narratives but placing them into a greater context, forging a better understanding of Winstanley's thoughts of nature. Winstanley did not promote an environmentalism as many believe, instead affirming that the earth was created to support both man and beasts, but that beasts were to be subservient to man. This superiority aligns with the long-held idea of the "great chain of being," which places humanity above all other earthly things.[9] While superior, Winstanley still had empathy for these beings, expressing distress when animals suffered cruel treatment at the hands of the authorities. Plants were also considered, noting that they were needed but should be accessible to everyone and not over-harvested. Nevertheless, to the Diggers, the earth was created to be exploited, and the creatures upon it were to be used to further the development of humans, contrary to some modern notions.

Using the geographical concept of "space" versus "place" allows for a reconsideration of Winstanley's writings, collectively building an understanding of the Diggers' concept of the commons. In a geographical context, "space" is defined as the purely physical location of something, devoid of meaning and complexity. In contrast, a "place" is a location whose meaning is constructed by its context and relationship with those who interact with and upon it.[10] Understanding Winstanley's relationship with his surroundings using this methodology, it is clear that his empathetic superiority over nature, combined with his religious, historical, political, and biological reasoning, established the commons as a "place" to be protected and shared by all individuals rather than a "space" which could be taken away by the greedy few.

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[9] E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1943), 23-33.
[10] Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), 29.

The methodological process of spatial history emerged throughout the 1970s and 80s, with Yi-Fu Tuan's influential 1977 work, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience,* becoming one of the foundational pieces of the "spatial turn" within the humanities.[11] Through this and other spatial works, by the 1990s, scholars had asserted a fundamental difference between "space" and "place." "Space" exists as a physical location devoid of meaning and context. "Place," in contrast, is constructed through the networked social, political, and material interactions and experiences individuals have with a geographic "space."[12] Further, these "places" are built through collective ideas based on shared experiences, forming from memory and emotions. Vastly different experiences can lead to differing ways of understanding the place between individuals; however, those with similar life patterns likely hold common ideas about places. Place-making is fundamental in understanding spatial history, as this sense of "place" emotionally ties the individual to the location through their repeated actions and memories.[13] Narratives are essential in place-making, recording events and giving the "place" a permanent identity. These place-narratives frequently romanticize the location, portraying it as either timeless and unchanging or, if it has been changed, attempting to harken back to older days when the "place" was pure.[14] Winstanley's writings act as a form of place-making, building a collective memory surrounding the social, political, and material interactions between the commons and the commoners while establishing that the land must return to how it once was.

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[11] Courtney J. Campbell, "Space, Place and Scale: Human Geography and Spatial History in Past and Present," *Past and Present* 239 (2018): 23-45.

[12] Jennifer Carter, and others, "Dis-placed Voices: Sense of Place and Place-identity on the Sunshine Coast," *Social & Cultural Geography* 8:5 (2007): 755-773; Joseph Pierce, and others, "Relational Place-Making: the Networked Politics of Place," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36 (2011): 54-70.

[13] Pierce, "Relational Place-Making," 54-56.

[14] Nuala C. Johnson, and others, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 162.

It must be acknowledged that this methodology is also one from the present placed onto those in the past. Unlike the ideas presented by other scholars, however, these are not social philosophies being ascribed to Winstanley, as the search for Marxist and Green narratives in his work looks for something that had not yet been invented. Instead, the "sense of place" individuals have with their surroundings is innate within the minds of all, whether conscious of it or not.[15] Specifically, emotional connections to certain locations form because of memories occurring at this "place." This means that the place-making it is argued Winstanley was doing through his writings was unconscious, yet still very much a reality. A place-based understanding of the Diggers is additionally vital as relationships with land formulated the backbone of England's hierarchy. While Marxist historians assert the existence of a class-based structure in early modern England, things were more complicated than this.

Rights to the Commons

While historians propose many variations regarding the exact social order within early modern English society, land ownership and tenure was undeniably one of the most important signifiers of one's position. William Harrison's *Description of England* demonstrated this ordering of society, dividing the English people into a hierarchy of four groups: "gentlemen, citizens and burgesses, yeomen, and artificers or labourers."[16] Comprising only two to four percent of England's population, gentlemen owned approximately sixty-five percent of England's land. Sub-levels within this gentry, based on the scale of land and profit the land produced, were also created, further determining the ordering of society.[17] Harrison's next category contained the citizens and burgesses who lived in the towns. Living in urban

[15] Robert Freestone and Edgar Liu, *Place and Placelessness Revisited* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1-6.
[16] William Harrison, *The Description and Historie of England* (1587), 156.
[17] Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London: Routledge, 1982), 8-11.

environments, these men were less determined by land ownership. Instead, citizens and burgesses created their status through wealth, serving as merchants, lawyers, and community officials.

The rural yeomen, placed one step lower on Harrison's hierarchy, derived much of their status from land, receiving their status and the right to vote by possessing freehold land that was valued by its yield to the degree of at least forty shillings per year, with significant variation above this number. It was not only the ability to generate wealth from land that made one a yeoman, as farming a substantial acreage was also deemed necessary, typically above 50 acres.[18] Below the yeomen were various other titles, including husbandmen, who held land below the 40 shillings a year or 50 acre thresholds. Also in this lowest rank were the "retailers… day-labourers, copyholders, and all artificers" who were unlikely to own much land at all.[19] Overall wealth undoubtedly determined placement in the social hierarchy of villages, and one successful within the village without owning vast tracts would still be highly respected. However, land ownership almost always determined the ability to accumulate wealth and reputation in early modern England.[20] Because of this land-based social order, an analysis of the Diggers' emotional connection with the land is critical in understanding why they fought for their rights to its use.

Winstanley was inspired by the Levellers, a political group formed during the English Civil War. The Levellers were a populist group, believing in equality in law, religious tolerance, and extended suffrage for almost all men: a levelling of society. Publishing their ideological pamphlet *An Agreement of the People* in 1647, the Levellers grew to hold great power within the

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[18] Wrightson, *English* Society, 14.
[19] Harrison, *The Description and Historie of England*, 163.
[20] Village craftsmen and tradesmen may have been considered yeoman, husbandman, or labourers, and many may have also owned land in addition to their trades; Wrightson, *English Society,* 17-18.

parliamentary New Model Army, coming to a head at the Putney Debates.[21] These debates saw Leveller sympathizers argue that the new constitution should give all men the right to vote, while the authority figures within the army, known as the Grandees, believed that the system should remain the same, with 40 shilling land owners being the lowest rank to get the vote.

Winstanley and other Diggers recognized what the Levellers stood for but believed they did not go far enough. While the Levellers argued for a levelling of society, the Diggers sought to make this levelling happen, beginning with the commons. The process of enclosure dates back to the medieval period but saw a significant uptick under Queen Elizabeth. As the English population increased throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, food prices increased with demand. Landlords, who often controlled large private fields along with the commons, saw this opportunity to privatize the common fields by enclosing them. Enclosure was not popular with the common people, seeing many riots and protests throughout the period. In April of 1649, Winstanley and the other Diggers continued these protests, planting crops on the commons of St. George's Hill and claiming the land to be the right of all people.

Physically, these commons the Diggers planted were not ideal locations. Their first work on St. Georges Hill took place on the side of the hill near Camp Close. This section of the hill was known to be barren, with one 1650 parliament survey recording that if the Diggers were successful in growing on the bare heath and sandy ground, it would prove that God was supporting them.[22] This barren heath did not stop Winstanley and the Diggers, as they adopted local agricultural techniques to make their planting successful. Following their violent eviction from St. George's Hill, the Diggers moved to Cobham, cultivating eleven acres on the Little

[21] Levellers, *An Agreement of the People for a Firme and Present Peace* (1647).
[22] John Gurney, *Gerrard Winstanley: The Digger's Life and Legacy* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 54.

Heath. This location was more agriculturally forgiving, allowing for the harvest of certain winter crops before being forcibly evicted by Parson Platt on April 19, 1650. While settling on this land, Winstanley wrote about his lived experiences on the commons and why the Diggers had the right to improve them. The eviction from Little Heath served as the end for Winstanley's Diggers. Inspired by Winstanley, small groups continued until 1650, but local authorities soon suppressed them as well. While unsuccessful, the Diggers' actions demonstrate longstanding resentment in society directed toward the enclosure of the common lands and profound political, historical, and spiritual beliefs that the commons should be free to all people.

Winstanley expressed these beliefs in several ways, often focusing on a spiritual message that used passages from the Bible to support his arguments. These passages frequently supported one of two positions. The first position Winstanley supported through scripture was the creation of earth for all of mankind. This was one of Winstanley's most frequent arguments and the one for which he is best known: that God created the earth as a "common treasury of livelihood to whole mankind without respect of persons."[23] Furthering this first position was Winstanley's second: that God created mankind to rule over other creatures, but that direct possession of them will lead to the destruction of the earth. To demonstrate this, Winstanley claimed that God created two earths. The first earth was "the living earth," which was mankind itself. The second earth was the "body of the earth," or physical earth, where all creatures lived and "universal love" appeared, bringing mankind together and uniting "all other creatures into a sweet harmony of willingness to preserve mankind."[24] However, this universal love could be broken by covetousness and particular love, leading to the division of all creatures. Winstanley cited this

[23] Gerrard Winstanley, "A New-Yeers Gift for the Parliament and Armie," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 130.
[24] Winstanley, "A New-Yeers Gift," 129.

division between man, started by the covetous actions of Cain against his brother Abel, as the catalyst for the problems of his time.[25]

Winstanley's use of nature within these biblical analogues is crucial, demonstrating his awareness of nature and that he understood it differently than has been assumed by green scholars. *Fire in the Bush,* his most religious work, breaks down the meaning of biblical symbols, including the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge.[26] Through these natural allegories, Winstanley equated the Garden of Eden to man's heart, stating that weeds and herbs (evil and good) are growing within the garden and that the weeds will continuously attempt to spread and overtake everything. He further claimed that so long as particular hands held the earth using violence, the weeds would continue to spread and overtake the world, leading to ruin.[27]

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge existed within the garden. The Tree of Knowledge, according to Winstanley, represented the "good and evil called imagination," while the Tree of Life represented universal love.[28] When the fruits from the first tree were eaten, man became "like the beasts of the field, void of understanding," as the imagination blinded those who ate its fruit and led them astray. Alternatively, eating from the Tree of Life embraced universal love and brought the individual closer to Christ through reason and conscience. Winstanley used these and other metaphors to justify why their rights to the commons should be valid. He did not do this by simply analogizing the nature of the English commons to the Garden

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[25] Gerrard Winstanley, "Fire in the Bush," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 217.
[26] Winstanley, "Fire in the Bush," 180-202.
[27] Winstanley, "Fire in the Bush," 172-174.
[28] Winstanley, "Fire in the Bush," 177.

of Eden. Instead, he used the garden as a metaphor for human existence and the many things which could go wrong with humanity. Justifying the rights to the commons through religion was Winstanley's first act of place-making, linking religious memory with the commons.

Building upon these religious assertions, Winstanley strengthened his belief that the commons should be free by bringing the argument back to England with history. Writing to General Fairfax, he posed a series of rhetorical questions, proving "that the common people ought to dig, plow, plant and dwell upon the commons, without hiring them, or paying rent to any."[29] By June of 1649, when this letter was sent, Fairfax had served as commander-in-chief of the parliamentary New Model Army for four years and had recently been elected as an MP in the Rump Parliament, making him one of England's most powerful figures. One month prior to this publication, Fairfax had led the suppression of the Leveller mutiny within the New Model Army.[30] One month before this, on April 20, Fairfax brought Winstanley and his fellow Digger William Everard to Whitehall, where parliament and the council of state met, questioning them on their activities.[31] Therefore, Fairfax had proven himself to be oppositional to like-minded protestors and capable of suppressing their political voices. Additionally, as a prominent figure within the rump parliament, Fairfax actively approved enclosures and decided the future of land usage laws. By directing this letter directly to Fairfax, Winstanley recognized the General as capable of affecting real change in England while simultaneously creating a more significant protest by removing the problems from a singular locality to all of England. With Fairfax's name

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[29] Gerrard Winstanley, "A Letter to The Lord Fairfax, and His Councell of War," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 43.
[30] *A Narrative of the Proceedings of His Excellencie the Lord General Fairfax in the Reducing of the Revolted Troops* (Oxford, 1649).
[31] Hessayon, "Restoring the Garden of Eden in England's Green and Pleasant Land," 2.

printed boldly on the front of the pamphlet, this likely drew more attention from reading, spreading the message further.

Winstanley began his argument by establishing that King William I came to control England through conquest, burning over thirty towns in Windsor Forest and compelling "the conquered English for necessity of livelihood to be servants to him and his Norman soldiers."[32] Building upon this, he established that King Charles was the last in the line of William's successors and that all laws created between these two kings reinforced the authority of the Norman conquest and the ability of those in power to take the lands of the commoners using force. Winstanley's history of this time also established how William established feudalism in England, taking the land from the free English people and consequently giving it to his many Norman officers and soldiers, creating a division within England where those in power were of Norman descent while the poor oppressed people, who were forced to work for the Normans, were the true Englishmen.[33] This oppression of the English people by the Norman invaders, which increasingly became known as the "Norman yoke" throughout the 1640s, continued to Winstanley's day, where any elected official was chosen by the descendants of the Norman tyrants, the free-holders and landlords, maintaining the "binding and restraining laws" and perpetuating a cycle of violence against the English people.[34]

The king's defeat meant that these monarchical laws would be overturned, and the laws would return to those that existed before William arrived; however, this did not occur, and the "binding and restraining laws" remained. Winstanley followed this history until his present day,

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[32] Winstanley, "A Letter to The Lord Fairfax," 49.

[33] Winstanley, "A Declaration to the Powers of England," 12.

[34] Christopher Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution – Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 361-365; Winstanley, "A Declaration to the Powers of England," 12.

examining the continuation of similar power dynamics, explicitly challenging those in power and claiming they lived in a "mighty delusion" as they "pretend to throw down that Norman yoke" while, in fact, maintaining it.[35] Solving this issue was simple to Winstanley: the commons. England was not free "till the poor that have no land, have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons, and so live as comfortably as the landlords that live in their enclosures."[36] Through statements like this, Winstanley began turning the commons into a distinct "place," using them both as a symbol of freedom and a way of achieving it.

Writing after the English Civil War, Winstanley used the idea of the English Commonwealth throughout his papers to further emphasize the rights to the commons. Addressing many letters to the Grandees of the New Model Army, members of parliament, and members of the council of state, notably Oliver Cromwell and Thomas Fairfax, Winstanley resisted the new overruling authority established by the Commonwealth government, equating it with the recently abolished monarchy, as lordships were maintained, and land remained the exclusive privilege of the "Norman yoke." These political pamphlets still used spirituality throughout, but their primary focus were the actions taken against the Diggers on St. George's Hill and the laws created to restrain the commoners' actions.

Primary to the Civil War was the promise of a free nation. Winstanley took issue with the upholding of this promise soon after the war ended, claiming that the people who had been promised "such protestations of liberty" continued to be "oppressed by the courts, [as]sizes, by thy justices and clerks of the peace," and "forced to spend that bread, that should save their lives

[35] Winstanley, "A Declaration to the Powers of England," 13.
[36] Ibid.

from famine."[37] Furthering this argument, Winstanley claimed to the powers of England that God had given universal freedom and liberty to all people as their birthright, and therefore, restricting these freedoms did not only break the promises of the war but went against God himself. Claims that many commoners did not fight directly in the war were also considered by Winstanley, noting throughout his papers that the commoners fought for this freedom with their bloodshed, but they also bought their freedom through taxes and provided free quarter to the roundhead army fighting against the monarchy. Because Winstanley declared almost all people of England as vital to the ongoing political changes, he established the commons as a "place" accessible to all who participated in creating the commonwealth.

Rights to the commons were not only grounded in the idealistic, as the land also served an essential need to those who used it. Winstanley evidently knew this, and while his writings primarily focused on the political, historical, and spiritual, he also established the lands' importance to commoners' everyday lives, stating in The Law of Freedom:

> True Freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and preservation, and that is in the use of the earth: for as man is compounded of the four materials of the creation, fire, water, earth, and air; so is he preserved by the compounded bodies of these four, which are the fruits of the earth; and he cannot live without them: for take away the free use of these, and the body languishes, the spirit is brought into bondage, and at length departs, and ceaseth his motional action in the body.[38]

To Winstanley, the oppressing landlords who restricted the use of the commons "may as well say, their brethren shall not breathe in the air, nor enjoy the warmth of their bodies… unless they will

[37] Winstanley, "A Declaration to the Powers of England," 2: 9.

[38] Gerrard Winstanley, "The Law of Freedom in a Platform," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 295.

pay them rent for it."[39] The enclosure of the commons represented an "oppression and bondage; but the free enjoyment thereof is true Freedom."[40] These commons had to be maintained as a "place" that was free and equal to all to sustain the physical lives of the many who used them and to maintain those peoples' liberty.

Empathetic Superiority

Conservation

The term "sustainable," the idea of meeting current needs while preserving the resource for future generations, is relatively recent, coming into use in the mid-1960s. The term "environmental sustainability" is even more recent, emerging in the 1970s with the development of environmentalist movements.[41] However, ideas of preserving environments for future use have existed for much longer. As early as the 13th century, many protections were put in place, prescribing hunting seasons for various animals, which excluded their breeding seasons and allowed populations to regenerate. One law protecting the breeding seasons for fish within the Thames was among these laws and served as the first appearance of the term "conservation" regarding the natural environment. These laws established the Lord Mayor of London as conservator of the Thames and charged him with ensuring the preservation of its stream and banks along with the fish within.[42]

Winstanley demonstrates aspects of a desire to conserve nature in his writings. In *The Law of Freedom*, Winstanley established rules for how individuals would acquire food if

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Winstanley, "The Law of Freedom in a Platform," 296.

[41] Jeremy L. Caradonna, *Sustainability: A History, Revised and Updated Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 1-8.

[42] John Stow, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster,* ed. John Strype (London, 1720), 34-38.

everyone shared the commons. As Winstanley saw the buying and selling of commodities as ungodly, he believed that all families should work collectively to gather crops during harvest season, storing the goods in a community storehouse. Additionally, if one wanted the meat of an animal, they could go to the butcher's shop, or they could go to the fields themselves and slaughter an animal. Winstanley importantly notes that families were only to take what they could eat, leaving enough for others. In his list of laws presented in Chapter IV of *The Law of Freedom*, Winstanley further emphasized this point, stating that no family should dress more meat than they can eat, and if they broke this law repeatedly, the master of the house would "be made a servant for twelve months under the taskmaster" so "that he may know what it is to get food."[43] These ideas likely came from a desire for all families to have equal access to natural resources rather than a preventative measure to maintain the environment and cattle populations. Nevertheless, Winstanley's ideas surrounding equal access to animals rejected the overexploitation of the commons, further establishing them as a "place" to be used by all English people. While equal access to the commons was paramount to his vision, an empathy for beasts and animals was also demonstrated throughout his writings.

Beasts

Favouring the utilization and improvement of the commons by all people, Winstanley nevertheless maintained an empathy for the land and animals surrounding him. This empathy did not stretch to the level that green scholars may suggest today, as Winstanley upheld the longstanding "chain of being" throughout his writing, placing man above other creatures. Combining this empathy for the land with his desire for improvement, it is evident that he held an empathetic superiority for the land. This feeling was crucial in his transformation of the

[43] Winstanley, "The Law of Freedom," 359-378.

commons into a "place," providing a networked history of interactions between man and nature rather than an emotionless transfer of material resources. Winstanley provided proof of this empathetic superiority throughout his work, recording his personal experiences with the commons and those of the other Diggers. Adding to these personal experiences, his theoretical works citing scripture and law demonstrate a close relationship with nature.

The "great chain of being" dominated the early modern conception of nature. This chain organized the various groups within nature into a hierarchy, with man dominating all things upon the earth while the angels and God remained above man.[44] Winstanley frequently expressed this idea throughout his biblical works, noting that God created man to be superior to the fish, fowl, and beasts while remaining equal with each other and subservient to the heavens. To Winstanley, God created all beings to preserve one another, and it was in this preservation that Christ lived.[45] Man was not the only creature to be cared for in Winstanley's reading of scripture, and it was through the actions of humanity that the other animals would also thrive. Therefore, righteous treatment of animals was necessary for the success of the commons, while evil intentions directed toward lower creatures would only bring the downfall of all men.[46]

"A Watch-Word to the City of London" records these evil intentions directed at animals on the commons.[47] In this pamphlet, Winstanley notes the violence done by local authorities against the Diggers who had established themselves upon the commons. Many Diggers had their animals stolen from them, including many cows that Winstanley had been watching. While

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[44] Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World* Picture, 23-33.
[45] Winstanley, "The Law of Freedom," 295.
[46] Gerrard Winstanley, "The New Law of Righteousness, in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1: 493.
[47] Gerrard Winstanley, "A Watch-Word to the City of London," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 79-106.

Winstanley claimed he was only watching the cattle for someone else, he nonetheless expressed distress at these animals' apprehension, demonstrating empathy toward their beings. The Diggers having animals upon the commons was an act of protest and place-making itself. Authorities resisted the Diggers' claim to the commons and their right to graze their animals upon them, ignoring the historical precedent of the commons as grazing lands and removing the animals in any way possible. The Diggers' livestock grazing affirmed these historical rights, upholding the commons as a "place" for the communities' use instead of a "space" that authorities could restrict.

Removing these animals was not originally intended to hurt them but was meant to restrain Winstanley, as removing his livestock meant taking away meat, cheese, and milk, leaving him to "feed upon bread and beer" alone.[48] Nevertheless, authorities did undertake harmful actions, and the community's negative reaction to these animals' treatment was recorded by Winstanley, as the authorities "beat them with their clubs" until the "cows heads and sides did swell, which grieved tender hearts to see."[49] These animals served as a form of protest and functioned as a part of the "place," with many in the local community emotionally connecting with them. Many of these cows, in fact, were owned by others in the community who had hired Winstanley to watch them. Because of this connection, Winstanley records that strangers rescued livestock from the lord's hands, returning four cows to him. Nevertheless, these lords returned, setting another seven cows and one bull loose. The livestock was eventually brought back to Winstanley; however, some had already been sold or killed. The remaining livestock suffered from another form of abuse perpetrated against Winstanley to prevent his success.

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[48] Winstanley, "A Watch-Word," 91.
[49] Winstanley, "A Watch-Word," 92.

Claiming to have bought three acres of grass from an unnamed lord of a manor, Winstanley arrived with money to mow the land and provide feed for his cattle but had the grass sold to someone else in front of him by the lord. Some time later, under cover of night, the bailiff opened the gates where Winstanley lived, and the cattle, facing starvation and being "little better than skin and bone," entered the fields of barley and other crops and began eating. Many fields were ruined, and cattle escaped. The relationship between Winstanley and his animals was undeniably one of economic security, as the violence done to them by authorities served to remove Winstanley from St. George's Hill. However, even with this economic perspective, he did not view these creatures as objects, feeling sympathy for them not because he suffered but because they both suffered.

Winstanley often addressed his writings to all his "fellow creatures," referencing other humans as such throughout his work. This was not entirely unusual during the period; however, the term was often used in association with the radical dissenters who arose following the Civil War, most prominently the Ranters. Ranters held a pantheistic belief that God lived within all creatures, seeing man as having no pre-eminence or superiority over them.[50] The Ranters, especially one of their most prominent members, Laurence Clarkson, additionally practised a form of antinomianism, believing that "sin hath its conception only in the imagination" and would not prevent them from doing what they would like.[51] Winstanley wrote a specific pamphlet distancing the Diggers from the beliefs of the Ranters, noting their "immoderate use of creatures" and propensity for idleness while equating their unchaste beliefs to a metaphorical

[50] Laurence Clarkson, *A Single Eye, All Light, No Darkness*, (London,1650), 15-16.
[51] Clarkson, *A Single Eye*, 8.

"kingdom of covetousness."[52] While disagreeing greatly with their antinomianism, Winstanley's characterization of creatures fits within the Ranters' pantheistic belief. His use of "fellow creatures" suggests an understanding that man was one of many creatures who all had God within them, promoting harmony among all beings upon the commons. Though the observance of pantheism in early modern England is not well documented, this similar thought by Winstanley and the Ranters, two largely oppositional forces among the dissenters, suggests a broader belief amongst commoners.

Winstanley frequently used natural allegories, many of which have been covered in previous sections. These allegories depict animals in many ways, from the evil imaginative serpent to the "void of understanding" beasts of the field. The depiction of these field beasts, likely cattle, is especially interesting compared to the above passages. While the above demonstrates empathy for these creatures, their depictions as "void of understanding" situates their position firmly below that of man, and the negative correlation relating to this condition further emphasizes his point. Winstanley lived closely with cattle throughout his life, working as a cowherd for large portions. Knowing these animals closely, it is clear that Winstanley had an affinity towards them but did not humanize them, as beasts remained far below humans.[53]

Winstanley was not alone in these complex feelings of empathy and superiority for animals, as many individuals held similar understandings. Within Winstanley's works, compassion from others is demonstrated, as many "tender hearts" grieved the sight of the

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[52] Gerrard Winstanley, "A Vindication of Those Whose Endeavours is Only to Make the Earth a Common Treasury, Called Diggers," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 235-236.

[53] Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), 174.

bludgeoned cattle.[54] Some individuals dating to the medieval period expressed distress at seeing animals killed, including King Henry VI.[55] A more definitive work is the fifteenth-century exposition on the Ten Commandments: *Dives and Pauper.* This work explained that murder of animals is okay when it provides benefits like meat or clothing, but not for cruelty's sake. Continuing, it states that "men should have the ruth of beasts and birds and not harm them without cause."[56] Ignoring this commandment would be sinning, and Winstanley's portrayal of the lords and bailiffs who beat his cattle aligns with this, casting them as an evil in the world. Even further on the empathetic spectrum was John Bulwer, who postulated whether "it were lawful for him to destroy any one species of God's creatures, though it were but the species of toads and spiders."[57] The destruction of any creature on God's chain would remove "that which is the jewel at that chain… insomuch that we are not only inferior to the beasts, but we are ourselves become beasts."

The significant quantity of animals in early modern England contributed significantly to this empathy. With constant daily interaction, many believed that animals understood the language and could communicate.[58] This personification was intensified in rural areas, where animals frequently lived in shared long houses alongside their owners, with the human and animal quarters separated by only a wall. Cows were frequently given names, but these most often were non-human names, using flowers, emotions, or descriptors instead. The emotional connections and interactions shared between humans and these animals on a daily basis furthered

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[54] Winstanley, "A Watch-Word," 92.
[55] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 152.
[56] *Dives and Pauper,* vol. 1, ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 35-36, quoted in Thomas, *Man and the Natural World,* 153.
[57] John Bulwer, *Anthropometamorphisis* (London, 1653), C.
[58] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 94-97.

the establishment of the commons as a "place" not only for man but for beasts as well. For Winstanley, this was the embodiment of living in godly harmony where man could be nourished while tending to the animals' needs.

Notably, the animals directly referenced by Winstanley were primarily working animals that contributed to the Diggers' success and well-being. These included cows and sheep, which were targeted by authorities who were attempting to remove the Diggers. Wild animals are less considered, but his thoughts on these beasts can be understood through Winstanley's frequent use of natural analogy. In *Fire in the Bush,* he considers the four evil beasts who rose from the sea to "oppress, burden, and destroy universal love."[59] Here, he compares the first beast, that of kingly power, to a serpent and a cockatrice that would devour its own body.[60] The other three beasts, representing the clergy, law, and buying and selling, are represented as mighty beasts with great teeth. Further, the law to Winstanley was like the Fox, who would pull the feathers from geese, the poor men, and devour them. It was primarily these predators who were viewed negatively, and other wild animals, especially birds and fish, were often acknowledged as representatives for good.

Plants

It was not only animals that Winstanley had empathy for, expressing certain connections with plants and the broader environment throughout his writings. He first expressed this when looking back in history, criticizing William the Conqueror. In his letter to Fairfax, Winstanley noted that William's New Forest, which was created to be the location of royal hunts, was preceded by the burning of thirty towns within the forest and some of the forest itself. Plants

[59] Winstanley, "Fire in the Bush," 192.

[60] The cockatrice was a mythical beast common in early modern English literature, made from the body of a dragon or serpent-like creature with the head of a rooster.

upon the commons were created to assist the commoners, so the burning of forests and removal of the commoners contradicted English law.[61] Winstanley further emphasized this right to the wood upon the commons in his *Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England,* which was explicitly addressed to the lords of the manors that had begun to, or intended to, cut down the common woods.[62] This pamphlet called for the ceasing of all lords from cutting down woods upon the commons, instead allowing the commoners to take advantage of the forests for their gain.

Between 1500 and 1700, many woodlands were logged in their entirety, leading one contemporary in 1690 to estimate that only six million acres of woodland remained.[63] These woods powered an industrializing England, serving as a fuel source and building material. Forests were largely understood as uncivilized, drawing those who could not afford to live anywhere else along with bandits and other criminals in hiding. Lords, not wanting this activity on their lands, cut down these forests, benefitting from the introduction of "civility" onto their land and, more importantly, the coin generated by the selling of the timber. Winstanley again demonstrates empathetic superiority in this document, as his call for the forests' preservation was not absolute. He instead called for the lords to allow the commoners to harvest the forests, where they would then sell the wood and make a profit, which they could then share amongst themselves. This felling would likely have been more equitable, giving the commoners access to the wood they needed to support themselves rather than going to market, yet the plants remained inferior to man, existing to support them. In calling for access to the woods, Winstanley created

[61] Winstanley, "A Letter to The Lord Fairfax," 49.
[62] Gerrard Winstanley, "A Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 31.
[63] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 194.

the commons as a "place" where commoners could extract wood, serving their individual and collective needs.

In *The Law of Freedom,* Winstanley describes his utopian vision for England's administration and laws. The society he describes is predominantly agrarian and pastoral, and laws surrounding this way of living feature prominently throughout the text. The most essential way Winstanley featured this way of living is in his section concerning intellectualism. Winstanley saw learning as something which had become detached from its subjects of study and encouraged experiential learning through living with the commons.[64] Those who learned this way would then give speeches about what they had learned from nature to community members, disseminating knowledge at a grass-roots level. These natural discoveries would then be rewarded with titles of honour. Winstanley recognized that the knowledge of nature was being kept secret by those in power, benefitting only themselves. This unbound professing of knowledge would open the minds of all people, allowing them to be more effective in their agrarian work and form a deeper connection with the nature around them. This work was divided into five "fountains from whence all arts and sciences have their influences:" husbandry, mineral employment, ordering of cattle, ordering of woods, and the pursuit of knowledge itself.[65] The commons played a crucial role in the ability of a commoner to perform these tasks, as three of these five fountains were associated directly with jobs that benefitted from the open use of the commons.

A personal understanding of nature was possibly the most important thing Winstanley introduced. This pursuit of knowledge would be ingrained within one's everyday life, comprising

[64] Winstanley, "The Law of Freedom," 357-358.
[65] Winstanley, "The Law of Freedom," 355.

one of the five fountains. Responding to an imaginary professor advocating for the prioritization of the study of heavenly and spiritual matters over nature, Winstanley claimed that "to know the secrets of nature, is to know the works of God; and to know the works of God within the creation, is to know God himself, for God dwells in every visible work or body."[66] Maintaining the commons' availability to all people enabled any person to interact with the commons and the nature they contained, theoretically bringing all people in England closer to God. Through these assertions, Winstanley reformed the commons from an emotionless "space" where individuals gathered material to a spiritual "place" where one could connect with God on a deeper level.

Winstanley was once again not alone in his understanding of nature. While many lords believed the destruction and harvest of the woods was the only course of action, others began questioning this. As early as the Yorkist period, parliament passed certain acts to ensure the prevention of wood wastage. These laws protected certain groups of young trees, prevented certain areas from being turned into farmland, preserved a stated number of timber trees per acre, and forbade their use in the iron industry.[67] However, the primary motives behind these laws were not in the interest of commoners. Enclosures were permitted to be constructed around young groupings of trees, and many other laws were designed to keep commoners away until the lords could harvest them for profit. Further inequalities of nature occurred when lords created forest parks for their personal leisure and hunting purposes.

Accessing nature provided various social benefits. Many early protestants saw nature as a better venue for prayer than the churches made from material shaped by man. Trees also served as memorials or landmarks, acting as a physical barrier between places, guiding travellers,

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[66] Winstanley, "The Law of Freedom," 342.
[67] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World,* 198.

commemorating families, or marking the location of historical events.[68] Perhaps the greatest representation of the relationship between man and nature within the period comes from Duchess Margaret Cavendish, whose 1653 publication *Poems and Fancies* contains three poems featuring man having a conversation with an aspect of nature: nature itself, an oak tree, and a beast. In the first conversation with man, nature scolds him for cutting down a tree, which was made to stand firm. Man responds that "trees are dull, and have no sense" and that beasts do not feel pain or fear death like humans do.[69] The oak's refutation of these claims is grotesque, questioning why, after providing a great service to man for many years, it must endure tortures from men: "first you do peel off my bark, and flay my skin, hew down my boughs, so chops off every limb."[70] The beast responds to man with a different approach, using allegory to compare man to various beasts, disputing that beasts cannot have sense if man is like them.[71] Being a Duchess, Cavendish was a Royalist, fleeing England during the Civil War. That Cavendish and Winstanley, two individuals with contrasting political opinions publishing simultaneously, shared a similar empathetic superiority for nature demonstrates that these ideas were pervasive within English society. These shared societal ideals would have made Winstanley's place-making argument for the rights to the commons resonate with more individuals.

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[68] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 212-217.

[69] Margaret Cavendish, "A Dialogue Betwixt Man and Nature," in *Margaret Cavendish's Poems and Fancies: A Digital Critical Edition,* ed. Liza Blake. Website published May 2019. Accessed March 10, 2024. https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/2019/04/27/a-dialogue-betwixt-man-and-nature/

[70] Margaret Cavendish, "A Dialogue between an Oak and a Man Cutting Him Down," in *Margaret Cavendish's Poems and Fancies: A Digital Critical Edition,* ed. Liza Blake. Website published May 2019. Accessed March 10, 2024. https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/2019/04/28/a-dialogue-between-an-oak-and-a-man/

[71] Margaret Cavendish, "A Moral Discourse of Man and Beast," in *Margaret Cavendish's Poems and Fancies: A Digital Critical Edition,* ed. Liza Blake. Website published May 2019. Accessed March 10, 2024. https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/2019/04/28/a-moral-discourse-of-man-and-beast/

Like his empathy for beasts, Winstanley's empathy for plants centred around those who brought benefits to the Diggers: the planted crops meant for cultivation. Wild plants also appear throughout his writings, notably in his natural allegory describing the weeds and herbs within the Garden of Eden.[72] These weeds represented the evil spreading over the land and had to be eradicated. This allegory shows that Winstanley did not empathize with plants that suffocated those that brought him benefits, like herbs and crops. However, many wild plants were more neutral than these weeds or herbs, and understanding Winstanley's position on them proves a more difficult challenge. The closest to neutral Winstanley holds an opinion on throughout his writings is that of trees, which the Diggers did not plant for personal gain. While not planted, these trees benefitted the Diggers and other commoners as fuel or building materials, increasing their empathy towards the plants. Evidently, these neutral plants received increased empathy when they benefitted individuals, even if that was not their original purpose, unlike the cultivated plants created to benefit their planters.

Common Thought

As demonstrated, many writers of the period had thoughts similar to Winstanley's, but did the general public of commoners sympathize with the Diggers and their understanding of the world? According to Winstanley, yes. On June 11, 1649, two freeholders, William Star and John Taylor, led other men "dressed in women's apparel" to the commons, where four Digger men were then heinously beaten.[73] Gender inversion in this way occurred for two primary reasons: as

[72] Winstanley, "Fire in the Bush," 172-174.

[73] Gerrard Winstanley, A Declaration of the Bloudie and Unchristian Acting of William Star and John Taylor of Walton," in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 2 vols. ed. Thomas N. Corns, and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2: 58-64.

discipline or as part of a protest.[74] Additionally, agricultural roles were frequently divided by gender, and one role women held was gleaning. This long-held common right to glean the fields of leftover crops following a harvest by the lord could have played a role in these men dressing as women, possibly refuting the Diggers' position by stating that commoners did, in fact, hold common rights. It is unknown why these specific men dressed in women's clothing, but they likely did so either to evade identification by the Diggers or because they were forced to do so as punishment. Future actions on St. George's Hill and Little Heath further validate that these men were forced to accompany Star and Taylor.

In 1650, John Platt, rector of West Horsley and lord of the manor of Cobham through marriage, began interfering with the Diggers, urging General Fairfax to send his soldiers before soon taking immediate action himself and pulling down the house of a family. He and other local lords then sent servants "up and down the town," warning their tenants of the consequences if they were proven to have provided food or shelter to the Diggers.[75] The lords soon returned, forcing their tenants to tear down more of the Diggers' homes. Winstanley was not upset with the tenants, noting they "looked with a cheerful countenance upon the Diggers" but could do nothing as their lords looked on. These tenants could very well have feared repercussions from their landlords. In addition, many copyhold farmers could not make enough to sustain themselves from only farming, requiring additional wage labour to feed their families.[76] The "strangers" who rescued Winstanley's cattle offer another example of how support for the Diggers may have been quietly demonstrated. These strangers were presumably others within the village who did not

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[74] David Cressy, "Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996): 438-465.
[75] Winstanley, "A New-Yeers Gift," 120.
[76] Wrightson, *English Society,* 14-15.

appreciate the actions Winstanley faced. It is also possible they were Diggers that Winstanley did not want to name for fear of persecution.

These sources are fundamentally biased as it is doubtful that Winstanley would portray tenants and other commoners as anything but sympathetic to his cause. Further evidence shows that not all within the community supported the Diggers, as the many names listed on the quickly filed indictment following the attack on the Diggers included many members of the middling sort. Others of the middling sort did support Winstanley, including shoemaker Thomas Starr and yeoman John Coulton.[77] While the full extent of the community's sympathetic feelings for the Diggers remains unknown, the inclusion of these feelings within pamphlets served as a significant act of place-making, establishing the Diggers' use of the land as a righteous cause and the commons as a "place" of communality.

Conclusion

Winstanley was not a paragon for an ecological movement in his time. However, his unique understanding of nature and humanity's place within it presented the commons as more than a "space" that the masses could have taken away from them. The inclusion of religion was vital in Winstanley's place-making. By establishing longstanding rights to the commons through biblical scripture, Winstanley portrayed them as a veritable Garden of Eden. Winstanley also used the Garden of Eden as a metaphor for man, explaining the evil weeds expanding over the earth that could only be defeated by living in communion with God, which meant living in harmony with one another and God's other creatures.

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[77] John Gurney, "Gerrard Winstanley and the Digger Movement in Walton and Cobham," *The Historical Journal* 37 (1994): 790-792.

With the biblical history of man's greed established, Winstanley brought the conversation to England. King William I and his Norman yoke conquered England, burning villages and restraining the English people from their land. Winstanley understood this history to have passed down to the present day, hoping that the abolition of the monarchy would restore England's lands to the people. As this did not happen, Winstanley began writing to those in power, demanding these land rights as he and other Diggers began living on St. George's Hill. This protest was not only founded on biblical, historical, and political arguments, but Winstanley further noted the basic need of the land and how many could not survive without it. Protesting through interacting directly with the commons, the Diggers challenged authority figures and established the commons as a unique "place" of resistance. Place-making requires collective memories and emotions to form through interactions with a "space." These spiritual, historical, political, and practical writings established these memories, even for those who may not have experienced the commons themselves.

For Winstanley and the other Diggers who did interact with the commons, empathetic superiority strengthened this emotional bond. This superiority engaged with the "great chain of being," placing man above all other living things on Earth and below the heavens. To Winstanley, being superior did not justify cruelty, and he demonstrated empathy for other creatures throughout his works. Winstanley worked as a cowherd for much of his life, and when his cattle were stolen and beaten by oppositional figures, he expressed his distress and recorded the sympathy of others. This sympathy for animals was not unique to the Diggers, as the Ranters and many other thinkers questioned the cruelty done to animals as God lived within them just as much as he did man. This sympathetic interaction with animals established a deeper emotional connection than others more removed would have had. In deepening this connection, the

commons became a "place" where all of God's creatures, both man and animal, could interact for mutual prosperity.

Winstanley's environment, including the crops and trees, was also shown empathy. Essential to the Diggers was knowledge of their environment, as understanding nature meant understanding God himself, and therefore, if one wanted to become closer to the Lord, one was required to become closer to the land. This land served the people, as wood went towards building homes and fueling industry, so Winstanley argued that the people should have ownership over it. These views were grounded in an economic perspective and were not as extreme as some thinkers like Margaret Cavendish. Nevertheless, equal access to wood, grounded in fundamental rights to the commons, established the longstanding memories and processes essential in forming a "place."

Winstanley and the Diggers were a relatively peaceful group of protestors, even while being beaten and having their houses torn down. The publication of the violence perpetrated against them further enshrined the commons with memory and emotion. It is unknown exactly how many commoners supported the Diggers and how many resisted their improvement of the commons. However, Winstanley's publications demonstrated an underlying support amongst commoners and intertwined authoritative violence with the longstanding rights to the commons, establishing the common land as a "place" for all.

Through his writing, Winstanley transformed the commons from a "space," made of barren heath and waste lands, into a "place" founded on the Diggers' emotions and interactions with the land. This "place" was one of resistance, spirituality, and equality, resisting authority by engaging all people to live with an empathetic superiority for nature, bringing them closer to God. Understanding the commons in this way, it is evident why Winstanley became idolized by

some in the Marxist and Green communities. 9, he was neither of these things, permitting the private holding of property and the improvement of land, including the harvesting of forests.[78] Winstanley's messages of resistance, spirituality, and equality upon England's common and waste lands have instead been applied to his entire life by those anachronistically placing modern ideas upon him.

This study, while extensive in its examination of Winstanley, is not complete. Many scholarly works have addressed Winstanley and the Diggers, yet they frequently neglect to include geographic considerations. Christopher Hill's works are one such example, where he outlines the Diggers' fight for land rights yet largely ignores their emotional connection to the commons, instead favouring a purely economic perspective. More recent works, like John Gurney's biography of Winstanley, explain the land where the Diggers worked in greater detail but still fail to mention any connection with it other than one of material gain. Understanding the Diggers from this perspective is crucial in understanding their entire motivations, as land comprised a great majority of what defined social order. Studying Winstanley's relationship with the land allows one to better understand his relationship with the social order and those in control.

Further work building from this paper may include a more exhaustive reading of the Diggers' works, including those not written by Winstanley, to better comprehend their shared emotional connection with the commons. Consideration of other radical groups would also be of interest in further study, comparing the Diggers' emotional connection to the land with more

[78] Winstanley goes as far as saying that the Lords and Gentry should have full access to their enclosed lands to do with what they would like. It was only the common and crown lands which he wanted to see returned to the commoners; Winstanley, "A New-Yeers Gift," 126.

established groups like the Levellers or those with certain similar beliefs, such as the Ranters and their pantheism. Additional studies of the land they dug could present further findings, allowing the researcher to empathize with the Diggers and the conditions they faced. Studying the land would also allow for assessing similarities and differences amongst all English commons and how this may have led to certain "hotspots" of enclosure resistance. Finally, a more exhaustive study of the emotional connections all people shared with the land would be beneficial, allowing for a more advanced understanding of social order.

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